

How to produce a unit newsletter

An interview with Stanley A. Skrabut, Maj, CAP, Deputy Commander for Seniors, NY212, and Publisher of The Ghost Writer, newsletter of Canandaigua Composite Squadron

1) Where do you get the content for your unit newsletter?

Prior to each newsletter, I send an email out to the members of our unit soliciting articles. They are really good about providing something no matter how small. I cheerlead a bit and ask specific sections for their input; e.g., Command (senior and cadet), Aerospace, Historian, Personnel, etc. I flag their email so that I won't delete it and I can find it when I build the newsletter.

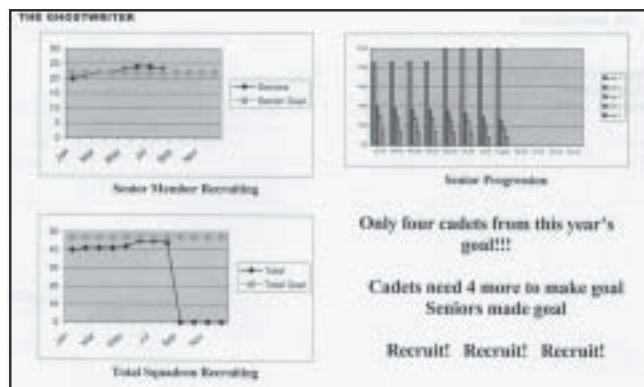
I belong to a number of mailing lists for CAP: cap-ae, cap-announce, cap-cadet, cap-es, cap-forum, cap-pao, cap-webmasters, nywg-info, and the Air Force Retiree News. If I see something of interest in the email, I flag the message so I can find it when I build the newsletter.

I also review National's web site for new material. If I find something, I copy the material out, and paste it into a MS Word document for later use. I do this as I find things. I do the same while reviewing NY Wing's Web Site, especially the calendar.

Finally, I collect membership stats in Excel. I download the capwatch data from national and print out reports. I post the results in Excel, and I copy and paste the charts I have created into the newsletter.



The Ghost Writer newsletter is simple, but effective. The masthead contains all the essential information (name, date, squadron info); the main headlines are larger and spacious; and the text is divided into two easy-to-read columns, all done easily in Microsoft Word. (RIGHT) Graphs tracking member recruitment are done in Excel and pasted into the Word document.



2) How do you put it together and how long does it take?

Typically, I put the newsletter together in MS Word. I keep each edition as a separate file. When I make a new newsletter, I make a copy of the previous edition, so that I can keep recurring items the same such as the masthead, the calendar, the return address, etc. I select the entire newsletter and highlight it yellow. When I update a portion of the

newsletter, I remove the yellow. This lets me know what I need to work on. I then start cleaning up and pasting articles into the newsletter. Personally I do not write any of the copy.

Putting together a newsletter after all the information is available, takes typically two - three hours. Less if the information is ready to go. More if you still have to search for information. If you do it as you go, the process is rather quick.

Continued on next page

How to produce a unit newsletter

Continued from front page

3) What's involved with the production/printing?

I have a personal printer at my house that prints on both sides. Once the copies are printed, I staple them together, fold them, and secure the fold with scotch tape. I then apply labels and stamps. Our newsletters are typically 4-5 pieces of paper and one regular stamp will get it to its destination.

I use MS Access and the capwatch data to print the labels. The database is a unit label report already created. For other regular addresses, I have preprinted entire sheets of labels.

Our unit purchases stamps for me as needed. I normally have 100-200 stamps, and I request more stamps as I get low.

4) How do you distribute the newsletter?

You can cut costs by hand-delivering at meetings. However, we have received very positive feedback by going the extra and ensuring that no one misses an issue.

Once all the copies are ready, I simply drop them into the mail system.

Wing Commander's Vision for Public Affairs

- 1. Launch of Wing Publication:**
Details will be announced as they are firmed up, but the plan is to launch a quarterly wing publication.
- 2. Increase in Publicity Wing-wide:**
Publicity provides recognition, a tool for recruiting, and a way to inform and win the support of the public and elected officials.
- 3. Training and Support for Units:**
A PAO workshop at the 2003 wing conference will be geared to senior members and cadets interested in public affairs and journalism.

Mediocre vs. Great Photos

DEVELOPING AN EYE FOR PHOTO COMPOSITION

Stand them up and shoot them.

No, we're not suggesting what to do with terrorists. Instead, we're describing what often happens when a photograph is snapped at a unit function (especially when the subject is an awards presentation or a promotion ceremony): Line up the principals and take their picture. It's an effective way to get a group of people in the photo, and to ensure the picture is sharp and in focus. However, it is also boring visually, and less likely to be played up in the local paper or CAP News.

What's a unit photographer to do?

Look at the subject from different angles. Squat down; stand on a chair; walk around the subject. Think about

composition, framing the scene in your mind's eye and seeing what angle could produce a more interesting image.

TIP: Often, a close-up foreground subject can create a very interesting dimension to the image. For example, in the case an official presenting an award, avoid having the two people face the camera; position yourself closer to one of them so you capture his or her profile in the foreground and the other person in full view. This is a much more interesting image, creating an illusion of dimension and depth to the photo.

That same technique is easy to apply when shooting other activities – from training to flights to encampments.



Shot of two pilots becomes more interesting, more dynamic with tail markings in foreground.



Photo of awards presentation (left) becomes more interesting when snapped from a low angle (below left) or closer to the presenter (below).

